BEST PRACTICE: Canada’s Role in World War One (CHC2D)

SOURCE: Port Credit Secondary School (Peel District School Board)

This evaluation addresses the areas of the Achievement Chart under Communication (Part One) and Thinking (Part Two).

PART ONE:

* Have students complete a chart with two columns: i) topic and ii) actions, written by hand and not typed. Select approximately 10 topics within the CHC2D textbook (i.e. preparing for war, French-English relations, the Battle of Ypres, the Battle of Vimy Ridge, etc.) and these will be the 10 topics that the students will have to read about and select at least 4 relevant details from each topic to place under the “actions” column of the chart.
* The purpose of completing this chart is to assist them with the research component in Part Two. The purpose of completing the chart by hand is to reduce plagiarism amongst students.
* One critique of this section is that it does not provide any critical thinking skills, and so I would add to this component of the assignment a paragraph to be completed, answering the question: **Based on the chart that you have completed, do you believe that Canada demonstrated that it was more independent as a nation during the Great War? Explain your reasoning.** Answering this question will ensure that the student has understood the material that they have written into the chart.

PART TWO:

* Students will select one of the following three methods for completing this section:
  + A Newspaper (Headlines and Front Page Stories)
    - Using the 10 topics selected in Part One, create a brochure of newspaper headlines and front page stories that illustrate an understanding of the contribution that Canada has made to the Allied victory in World War One
    - The articles must be written from the time period
    - There must be appropriate advertisements from the time period
    - Each article must have a title byline, picture, and caption
  + A 3-D Model
    - Using the 10 topics selected in Part One, chose one of these topics and create a three dimensional model.
    - The model must be detailed, with labels, look professional, and have Canadian content.
    - Popular 3D models include: a trench (two full trenches with a ‘no-man’s land’ in between, flags, soldiers, machine gun nest, an airplane, and an area of a gas attack); an airplane (scale model, detail fighting capabilities, technological advances); a gas mask (explain how it works, where it was used, and the symptoms of a gas attack).
    - Once the student has completed their model, they must then present it to their peers and answer any questions.
  + A Website
    - Using the 10 topics selected in Part One, choose one of these topics and create a detailed website that addresses the topic.
    - The website must include graphics, have appropriate weblinks, be interactive, and user-friendly (in other words, do not just produce a webpage full of text!).
* The principle strength of this second component is that it caters to a variety of learners (i.e. differentiated learning). For those that are more linguistically inclined, the newspaper seems to be a perfect fit; for those that are visual or hands-on learners, the 3D model works well; for those that prefer to make use of technology, the website is where they can let their talents shine through!
* Students have also completed alternative assignments, including a cartoon, and a video game!
* A major weakness is the fact that most students will select the 3D model because they believe it will be the simplest of the three choices for the second component, however, they do not realize that this model must be built, not bought, and that they face their peers’ questions in a presentation.
* This component also lacks critical or historical thinking skills. This can be corrected in the following way:
  + Newspaper: Have a mandatory Letter to the Editor section where students must retrieve a primary source from the time period and respond as the editor of the newspaper
  + 3D Model: Have the students play the role of a vendor attempting to sell their model at a post Great War exhibition. Have their peers play the role of potential buyers and have the students vote for the one model that they would purchase at the end of the presentations and the reasons for it.
  + Website: Have a page on the website where the student must connect their Great War topic to a current event or issue. This will get the students to think about historical connections.